



PRESS RELEASE

House National Security Committee

Floyd D. Spence, Chairman

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 21, 1998

CONTACT: Maureen Cragin
Ryan Vaart
(202) 225-2539

HOUSE ENDORSES DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Today, the House endorsed the National Security Committee's effort to address some of the growing quality of life, readiness and modernization shortfalls facing today's military, by passing H.R. 3616, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1999, on a 357 to 60 vote. Upon final passage, Chairman of the House National Security Committee Floyd Spence, issued the following statement:

"I am pleased that a bipartisan majority of the House has endorsed the National Security Committee's approach to reprioritizing the President's defense budget in order to better manage the growing the level of risk associated with an under-resourced security strategy.

"The spending levels authorized in this bill are almost 40 percent lower than those of little more than a decade ago and, in fact, represent the lowest level of inflation-adjusted defense spending since before the Korean War. Earlier this year, the Joint Chiefs of Staff testified that their fiscal year 1999 budgets contained shortfalls of more than 10 billion dollars, and shortfalls of more than 58 billion dollars over the next five years.

"Despite the National Security Committee's best effort to address the growing quality of life readiness and modernization shortfalls, Congress will never be able to do more than make improvements at the margin in the absence of additional defense resources. The magnitude of the shortfalls is so great that they cannot be eliminated by simply reprioritizing the President's request. Nonetheless, when considered in the context of declining defense budgets, this bill represents a marked improvement over the President's request."

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A summary of the bill's major provisions is posted on the committee's homepage at <http://www.house.gov/nsc/>.